

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** August 18, 2011

**Agenda Item:** Acquire Private Inholdings Within Spotted Dog WMA (Region 2, Powell County)

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:**

**Approval of Tentative Rule:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approval of Final Rule:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Endorse Course of Action:**   X  

**None - information only:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

**Background** (Brief description of the issue, decision to be made, history, etc.):

Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is split in two portions by 2,917 acres of private in-holdings. The in-holdings are owned by G. Reistad (Reistad; 357 acres), B. Mosier (Mosier; 1,280 acres), and Spotted Dog Canyon Land Investments (hereafter Cross Canyon Ranch; 1,280 acres). The Mosier's, Cross Canyon Ranch, and Mr. Reistad have expressed interest in exploring options for sale or trade of land, but no commitment or due-diligence has occurred. Fee-title acquisition of the Reistad, Mosier, or Cross Canyon Ranch in-holdings; or trade of Cross Canyon parcels to consolidate ownerships, will benefit the entirety of the WMA by making it easier for FWP to manage the land, wildlife, and public recreation.

Spotted Dog WMA supports the largest concentration of wintering elk in the Upper Clark Fork (over 1,000 elk in 2011), and is yearlong habitat for antelope, mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, and black bear. Habitat features include extensive native grasslands, 45-miles of riparian habitat, aspen patches, and dry Douglas-fir forests. West-slope cutthroat trout are found in Spotted Dog, O'Neill and Trout Creeks.

**Public Involvement Process & Results** (Brief description of the type of public involvement and summary of what we heard from the public): Formal public involvement under MEPA would follow the Commission's endorsement and negotiations with the landowners.

**Alternatives and Analysis** (Brief description of alternative solutions with analysis of the pros and cons of each): A range of alternatives would be explored in negotiations with the private landowners. Although there is a high degree of compatibility between the WMA and the current management of the private inholdings, this could change and affect the WMA as landownership and management change in the future.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale** (Brief description of our recommendation to the Commission and the reasons for it): If completed, the acquisition of inholdings within Spotted Dog WMA would protect an ecologically significant area, while providing exceptional hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing opportunities for current and future generations.

**Proposed Motion** (Draft language the Commission could use to adopt the agency recommendation): Move that the Commission endorse the Department's proposal to pursue the purchase of the inholdings within Spotted Dog WMA.